

The Changing Depiction of Jealousy in the Victorian and Modern Novel

A Senior Honors Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for graduation
with research distinction in English in the undergraduate colleges
of The Ohio State University

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May 2009

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Introduction

Jealousy is the emotion that a lover experiences when faced with the possibility of losing a beloved to a rival. While the name for this emotion remains consistent across the Victorian and modern eras, however, I began my project to describe jealousy in these periods with the belief that the experience beneath that name might prove somewhat different across time.¹ In order to elucidate these potential differences, I turned to canonical novels of each era, confident that these works would yield important historical evidence thanks to their uniquely thorough depiction of human experience. In working with this evidence I made three assumptions. First, I assumed that the authors² of these novels create characters who are somewhat representative of the people of their era. Second, I assumed that as the authors depict their characters responding to jealousy, they are revealing not only how they believe jealousy functions, but also if they believe that these characters could or should respond to jealousy in another manner. Third, I assumed that these authorial beliefs can be discerned through close reading. By making these assumptions I was then able to chart the historical change in how authors depicted jealousy—both how they believed their contemporaries experienced it, and how they believed their contemporaries ought to experience it.

While my reading began to provide me with evidence of historical change, however, I still needed to marshal that evidence into an argument. This argument only began to develop after I decided to focus on three elements of jealousy which constitute the emotion across both the Victorian and modern era: *cause*, *action*, and *resolution*. By studying the changes in these trans-historical elements my argument came into focus. Modern lovers, my evidence suggests, took greater responsibility for their jealousy than did their Victorian contemporaries.

Specifically, modern lovers took more responsibility for *causing* their jealousies, for their jealous *actions*, and for *resolving* their jealousies. By examining how these three elements of jealousy were experienced by characters and imagined by authors one can see the shift towards greater personal responsibility that took place as the Victorian era developed into the modern.

Cause

The cause of jealousy, both how a lover perceives it and how an author depicts it, plays a large role in determining the entire course of that character's jealousy. It is in deciding the cause that Victorian lovers first perceive themselves as victims of external circumstances. Certain that they bear no causal responsibility, they often look for someone to blame, generally the beloved, a rival, or both. Victorian novelists offer little or no criticism of this point of view. These authors do not depict their characters as fully responsible for causing jealousy, even in situations where jealousy results from a misunderstanding and neither beloved nor rival can be reasonably blamed.

Marius Pontmercy of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* (1862) holds others responsible for causing his jealousy. In the chapter, "A puff of wind," Marius sits on a park bench while his beloved Cosette walks by arm-in-arm with her father. When a gust of wind lifts her skirt and exposes her leg, Marius becomes "dismayed and furious." "It was true that no one else was there to see her," runs his free indirect discourse, "but supposing there had been someone!" However hypothetical, this supposition creates real jealousy that Marius blames Cosette for instigating. Although Cosette responds to the gust by immediately smoothing down her skirt, Marius still deems her conduct "disgraceful" and gives her "the most ferocious of frowns" when she passes again. His "wrath" subsides only after he nurses "the grievance for three whole days" and

manages to forgive her. Marius sees himself as a victim of jealousy who reserves the right to judge the person or persons who caused him to feel this pain. Refusing to take responsibility, he even spreads the blame to an elderly army veteran whom he sees in the park and illogically supposes may have caught a glimpse of Cosette's leg. Initially, Marius wants to eliminate this source of his problem by strangling him. Nevertheless, he manages to control his violent emotions, even if he fails to recognize that the old man bears no responsibility for creating the young man's jealousy. (615, 616).

Hugo criticizes Marius' understanding of this situation but decides to employ the scene as a source of humor rather than plot consequence. After the gust of wind, Marius is "ready to be jealous of his own shadow" and finds such a shadow in the old, wounded veteran. "What had the old relic got to be so happy about?" Marius wonders, before asking additionally, "What link was there between [the veteran's] wooden leg and a certain other leg?" This desperate attempt to link the soldier's leg with Cosette's illuminates the illogical process by which Marius generates his jealousy. It also provides the reader with a laugh. Similarly, Hugo's mock-heroic description of Cosette's skirts as "more sacrosanct than the robes of Isis!" functions to mock the overly serious and overly possessive Marius. While Hugo finds his character a worthy target for irony, however, he also finds this criticism sufficient and does not create negative consequences for Marius' mistaken jealousy. The lover may be foolish in his belief that Cosette needs his forgiveness, but this foolishness does little to harm their relationship. (616, 615).

While he clearly distances himself from Marius' attitudes, Hugo also excuses the lover for not taking responsibility for causing his jealousy. Marius may be jealous of his own shadow, but as Hugo authoritatively declares, "Thus it is that without justice or reason the extraordinary

and bitter flame of jealousy of the flesh flares up in the heart of man.” Jealousy, by its nature, springs from paranoia, and Marius does not deserve excessive blame for falling prey to the fury lurking inside all men. Hugo’s language also functions to place the responsibility for causing jealousy outside of the Marius. By declaring Marius “possessed” and by characterizing his anger as a “paroxysm of jealousy,” Hugo implies that jealousy is like a demon or a disease that comes from outside the lover and wrests control from him. Similarly, Hugo does not depict Marius inventing his jealousy out of thin air but being incited by a “puff of wind” that the narrator deems “the only offender.” While this latter claim seems humorous rather than definitive, it nevertheless accords with Hugo’s tendency to absolve Marius of responsibility. Marius causes his jealousy, but he is not the only or even the first cause of that emotion and therefore does not deserve full blame. (615, 616, 615).

James Joyce’s play, *Exiles* (1918), examines the causation of jealousy from a modern perspective. Like Marius, Richard Rowan plays a large role in causing his jealousy, but unlike the Victorian lover, Richard takes responsibility for that role. Richard becomes jealous of his friend, Robert Hand, when that friend arranges a meeting with Richard’s wife, Bertha. Although Richard knows that Robert harbors feelings for Bertha, Richard refuses to prevent them from meeting because of his desire to create a sense of doubt that might reignite the passion of his marriage. Later, after the rendezvous takes place, Richard refuses to blame his wife or to diminish the role he played in creating his jealousy. When Bertha says to him, “[y]ou urged me to it [. . .] For your own sake you urged me to it,” criticizing her husband’s failure to bar her from seeing Robert, Richard responds to this accusation by saying, “I did not make myself. I am what I am.” Richard does not deny pushing Bertha into the arms of Robert, but rather denies that

he can help being the kind of person who would do such a thing. Only in his final speech, however, does Richard reveal the degree to which he accepts responsibility for causing his own jealousy. “I have wounded my soul for you– a deep wound of doubt which can never be healed,” he tells Bertha, and by claiming that *he* is the one who wounded his soul, that *he* is the one who created the doubt that pains him as jealousy, Richard stakes his claim as a modern jealous lover. (66, 73).

Joyce reveals how jealous lovers often play a role in causing their own jealousy. Where Hugo looks outward to make excuses for Marius, Joyce looks inward to invent two characters who help to cause their own jealousies. Leopold Bloom, the protagonist of *Ulysses* (1922), spends much of his day coping with the realization that his wife is beginning an affair with her tour manager Blazes Boylan. Even in this devastated jealous lover, however, Joyce manages to reveal a hidden ambivalence by depicting Bloom’s unconscious reaction to this infidelity. Towards the end of the day Bloom slips into a hallucination wherein he sees Boylan making love to Molly. He then responds to this vision with the exclamations, “Show! Hide! Show! Plough her! More! Shoot!” As this reaction makes clear, in some part of his mind Bloom longs for the antlers of the cuckold. By revealing this hidden desire, Joyce casts doubt upon the Victorian characterization of the jealous lover as innocent victim. In *Exiles*, Richard not only desires that Bertha take a lover but admits to that desire while talking to his friend and rival Robert. “[I]n the very core of my ignoble heart I longed to be betrayed by you and her– ” he tells his rival, “in the dark, in the night– secretly, meanly, craftily.” This admission makes it all but impossible for the audience to view Richard as an innocent victim who bears no responsibility for his jealousy. Joyce refuses to see the jealous lover as wholly without blame. Instead he creates characters

whose hidden feelings reveal their complicity in causing jealousy. (*Ulysses*, 462; *Exiles*, 42).

With this complicity comes a greater emphasis on the necessity of taking responsibility for one's own emotions. Hugo's criticism of Marius is largely comic. Nevertheless, no matter how seriously one takes this criticism, it remains merely criticism. Modern authors, however, move beyond criticism to depict characters who take responsibility for causing jealousy. While somewhat unique even in its own time, Richard's willingness to admit to his role in causing his jealousy has no analogue in Victorian literature. Richard offers the modern reader an example of a lover taking responsibility for his jealousy and coming to terms with what he has wrought. While what he sees is troubling, by looking inward he succeeds in seeing with clarity.

Actions

Victorian lovers believe that others cause their jealousies and often attempt to take revenge upon these architects of jealousy through violent action. While many lovers no doubt feel justified in their violence, however, the question of whether or not these actions are moral was a moot one for the Victorians who believed that jealous lovers are temporarily insane, destined to kill, or both. To the Victorians, jealous lovers are men who cannot control themselves, men who are not responsible for their actions.

Roubaud, of Zola's *The Beast Within* (*La Bête Humaine* [1890]), views himself as a victim of others who cause his jealousy and deserve to be punished. Even though, as the title of Roger Whitehouse's translation indicates, the beast of Roubaud's jealousy may come from within, he feels no more responsibility for awakening the creature than he does for the beast's violent nature. When he discovers that his wife, Séverine, was molested by her godfather, Grandmorin, Roubaud beats her viciously. To Roubaud, the jealousy that he feels is at least

partly her fault. When he finds himself unable to kill her, however, Roubaud decides that he must kill the other architect of his jealousy, Grandmorin. “I can’t sleep with you again, until I’ve killed him,” Roubaud tells his wife, and by night’s end he has slit the old man’s throat. (28, 29).

Considering that Roubaud believes himself to be a victim of jealousy, it seems as if he would be willing to take full responsibility for his efforts to revenge himself upon his oppressors. No matter how justified he may feel in taking vengeance, however, a close study of his thinking reveals that he does not view himself as responsible for his actions before, during, or after his assaults. Before he murders Grandmorin, Roubaud screams, “I must kill him! Kill him! Kill him!” He clearly desires to murder the old man, but his language suggests that he has no choice. Similarly, while reflecting on his state of mind prior to the murder, Roubaud claims, “It had seemed to [me] then that if [I] hadn’t killed him, life would have been impossible.” By viewing the murder as less of a decision than a necessity, Roubaud minimizes the responsibility that he bears for plotting that murder. During his attack on Séverine, Roubaud again never questions the necessity of killing her. That Roubaud refrains from murdering her results from the fact that he “still desired her, the bitch,” and not from any sense that jealousy can be overcome nor from any realization that a lover is responsible for his actions regardless of his rage. Finally, Roubaud also fails to take full responsibility for his actions after they are concluded. For example, when he admits to the murder of Grandmorin, he represents it “simply as a crime of passion.” This defense, which the historian Peter N. Stearns describes as an effort to paint the jealous husband as “temporarily insane and so not responsible for his actions,” enjoyed a great deal of currency in the Victorian world.³ While only twenty-some Americans were acquitted of their crimes of passion from 1859 to 1900, these trials likely allowed individuals “to indulge a sense of jealous

outrage that they [. . .] could not express in their own lives,” and the power of the defense only began to diminish “after 1900.” Roubaud’s unwillingness to take responsibility for his jealous actions is in accordance with his time’s understanding of the psychology of the jealous mind. (Zola, 29, 173, 28; Stearns 29, 28, 30).

Even more than his character Roubaud, however, Zola sees the jealous lover as someone who deserves little blame for his actions. In the violent first chapter of *The Beast Within*, Zola describes one character as “a wisp of straw blown about in a violent gale” and as the victim of a pain “like a dagger” planted in the chest. That character is not Séverine, but Roubaud. In his depiction of Roubaud, Zola emphasizes that the jealous lover is helpless to control his actions. When Roubaud says of Grandmorin, “I must kill him!” he is crying in unison with the narrator who characterizes the lover’s urge to kill as “irresistible.” In the midst of his rage, Roubaud is not a thinking agent but rather “the plaything of a violent storm,” a man whose desire for violence comes not from his mind but from “somewhere in the troubled darkness of his flesh, from deep down amidst the stirrings of his wounded desire.” Zola depicts Roubaud as a victim of irresistible urges who is not responsible for his actions. (29, 26, 29, 27, 29).

The novelist justifies this depiction of the jealous lover through an appeal to biological determinism. While in his jealous rage, Roubaud is described as being “driven by a single overriding need” to “appease the beast that raged within him.” This figurative language is not merely atmospheric but point to the biological roots of Roubaud’s jealousy. His response to learning of his wife’s adolescent molestation is that of an animal, and when Séverine expresses that she cannot understand how the actions of her childhood can make her husband “so insanely jealous,” she is failing to integrate her observation that she is seeing in him “the sense of an

animal anger.” She cannot understand his jealousy because there is no logic to follow. His rage is an instinctive, bestial reaction passed down through his animal ancestors. (27, 28).

Zola also reinforces his belief that the jealous lover is not responsible for his actions by infusing his novel with a naturalistic fatalism. Particularly striking is Zola’s effort to turn the train engine from a symbol of technological progress into a symbol of man’s relentless animal nature. Although this shift is clearest in the novel’s final sentence, when Zola depicts a driverless train running on “like some mindless, unseeing beast,” it is expressed throughout the novel. Indeed, when Zola describes the train carrying Roubaud and Grandmorin as possessing tail lamps that look “like drops of blood from an open wound,” he is establishing a link between the train and the murder metastasizing within it. Having accepted this connection, the reader can then recognize that when Zola writes of the train, “Nothing could now stop it,” he is also noting the inevitability of Grandmorin’s murder. Even if he wants to, Roubaud cannot apply the brakes to his jealousy and therefore cannot be held responsible for the path that he follows. (390, 36).

Through his portrayal of Roubaud, Zola establishes his belief that jealous lovers are not responsible for their actions, and he explicates this belief even further in his depiction of Jacques Lantier. “A man driven to acts beyond his control, and whose cause was beyond his own understanding,” Jacques and his tragic plight make a compelling argument that jealous lovers are not responsible for what they do. Upon coming near women, Jacques becomes filled with a desire to murder them, a jealous rage that overwhelms him even though “none of these women [are] known to him personally.” His jealousy springs not from any experience in his life but from “the accumulated ill that women had inflicted upon the race of men” beginning with “the first infidelity in the dark recesses of some primeval cave.” Here Zola is again justifying his position

that jealous lovers are not responsible for their actions by recourse to biological determinism. Whereas the nature of Roubaud's jealous rage is inherited from animal ancestry, however, Jacques' jealousy and subsequent desire to kill are inherited from the first humans. Zola came to these ideas by reading contemporary research, including the findings of Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso, who believed that "the most barbaric crimes have a physiological, atavistic origin, deriving from animal instincts." This understanding of violence forms the basis for Zola's dramatization of jealous action throughout *The Beast Within*.⁴ Indeed, Roubaud's jealousy even finds a "physiological" expression in his eyebrows, which meet "in a bristly line across his forehead, lending his face a permanent frown, like a jealous lover." That Zola mentions this characteristic before Roubaud exhibits any sign of jealousy provides only the initial indication that his destiny is inevitable. Roubaud and Jacques are victims of their savage instincts, born to be jealous and to consummate that jealousy through murder. In *The Beast Within*, the novel's language, scientific underpinning, and inexorable plot function to dramatize the idea that men are driven to jealous actions for which they are not responsible. (Zola, 58, 7; Whitehouse, 395).

Gerald Crich, one of main characters in D.H. Lawrence's *Women in Love* (1920), begins his experience of jealousy much as a Victorian would. Gerald's jealousy commences when his lover Gudrun Brangwen begins to withdraw from him, first by communing with nature and later by spending time with the sculptor Loerke. Descriptions of Gerald's response, which depict him as "one blind, incontinent desire, to kill her," create a strong parallel between him and Victorian lovers like Zola's Roubaud, whose rage is "blind, demented." Gerald's belief that "there would be no satisfaction, till his hands had closed on" Gudrun likewise parallels Roubaud's feeling that he cannot sleep with his wife again until he has killed her godfather. The possessive nature of

Gerald's jealousy also links him with another character from *The Beast Within*. When he contends that after strangling Gudrun "he would have had her finally and for ever," Gerald approaches the position of Jacques, who feels that to "possess [Séverine] fully he must kill her." Blind, determined, and possessive, Gerald resembles his Victorian counterparts so closely that he seems destined to follow their example of taking revenge on the beloved or the rival who they blame for their jealousy. (Lawrence, 462, 460; Zola 22, 349).

In the novel's climactic scene, however, Gerald takes responsibility for his jealous actions. When he finally confronts Loerke and Gudrun, Gerald begins exacting his vengeance, punching Loerke twice and choking Gudrun after she strikes him. In the midst of this assault, however, Gerald relaxes his grip on Gudrun's throat, a decision that marks a major historical shift in the experience of jealousy. Unlike Roubaud, who balked at killing Séverine because he "still desired her," Gerald spares Gudrun because he sees himself as responsible for his actions. "A revulsion of contempt and disgust came over Gerald's soul," writes Lawrence of this turning point. "The disgust went to the very bottom of him, a nausea. Ah, what was he doing, to what depths was he letting himself go! As if he cared about her enough to kill her, to have her life on his hands!" Unlike Victorian lovers who believed that the passionate nature of their jealousy made them unaccountable for their actions, Gerald believes that even if he killed Gudrun in a rage he would still "have her life on his hands." For the modern lover, no amount of passion can excuse violent action. (Lawrence, 472; Zola, 28).

While Gerald may walk away from Gudrun and Loerke with his morality intact, he walks away to an icy death in the Alps. As a result it seems necessary to gather evidence beyond Gerald's triumph of self control in order to establish that Lawrence supports taking responsibility

for one's own jealous actions. One source of evidence can be found in Lawrence's desire to cast off all traditional assumptions about responsibility and to forge a new vision. Through his mouthpiece, Rupert Birkin,⁵ Lawrence reexamines even the seemingly straightforward responsibility of murder. "It takes two people to make a murder," Birkin begins, "a murderer and a murdere. And a murdere is a man who is murderable. And a man who is murderable is a man who in a profound if hidden lust desires to be murdered." While shocking and illogical⁶ this passage reveals the degree to which modern writers were determined to rethink the Victorian understanding of responsibility, especially with regards to violent action. After witnessing the horrors of the First World War, authors like Lawrence began to believe that men who had once been classified as victims now had an obligation to do all that they could to prevent violence. He refused to excuse "victims" of jealousy for their violent outbursts and argued that these lovers should hold themselves responsible for their actions (33).

Further evidence that Lawrence supports taking responsibility for one's jealous actions can be found in his portrayal of the absurdly old-fashioned Hermione Roddice. Desperately in love with Rupert Birkin and jealous of his relationship with Ursula Brangwen, Hermione attempts to strike him with a ball of lapis lazuli. Unlike Gerald, who stops himself from following through on his murderous intentions, Hermione only concludes her assault when her victim regains his composure and leaves the room. During her attack she never experiences the moment of contempt and revulsion that halts Gerald because she never sees herself as responsible for her actions. Likewise, Hermione continues to reject this responsibility even after Gerald has left, claiming "she had only hit him, as any woman might do, because he tortured her." Her actions took place only because *he* tortured her; her actions are only what any woman

might naturally do, and therefore hardly worth inciting introspection. If the reasoning behind this rejection of responsibility seems somewhat flimsy, however, Hermione's position loses further credibility when it devolves into obvious self-justification. "She was perfectly right," continues Lawrence's rendering of her thoughts, "[s]he knew that, spiritually, she was right. In her own infallible purity, she had done what must be done. She was right, she was pure." In this scene Lawrence demolishes the irresponsible lover, both indirectly, by rendering the desperation implicit in Hermione's repetitive rationalizing, and directly, by describing Hermione's countenance as "drugged, almost sinister." Like Gerald, Hermione begins her experience of jealousy as a Victorian would, blaming another person and deciding to hold him responsible. Failing to match Gerald's moment of modern insight, however, she carries her irresponsible vision of jealousy to its conclusion, a conclusion that Lawrence mocks as absurd. An important foil for Gerald, Hermione's failure in handling jealousy underscores Lawrence's emphasis on the moral imperative to take responsibility for one's jealous actions. (106).

Resolution

Whether by blaming others for causing the jealousy or by seeing their actions as uncontrollable, Victorian lovers fail to take responsibility for their emotions. This general flouting of responsibility, however, does not necessarily mean that Victorian lovers will refuse to take responsibility for resolving their jealousies. For example, though Roubaud believes that he is not in control of his actions and that "the awful truth" of the affair will "be with him forever," his murder of Grandmorin still constitutes an attempt at resolving his jealousy— even if that murder is also motivated by revenge. Nevertheless, certain Victorian characters do extend their refusal to take responsibility for jealousy to a refusal to attempt to resolve jealousy, as is the case

in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847). (25).

In *Jane Eyre*, the titular heroine fails to take responsibility for her jealousy or its resolution. Midway through the novel Jane's beloved Rochester begins courting Blanche Ingram in an attempt to foment Jane's love. While the plan succeeds in making her jealous, Jane consistently equivocates on this point. "But I was not jealous: or very rarely," she writes in reference to the period when Rochester courts Blanche, "the nature of the pain I suffered could not be explained by that word" because "Miss Ingram was a mark beneath jealousy." Similarly, when Rochester reveals his ruse to Jane and asks if she was jealous, she sidesteps the question, responding, "Never mind, Mr. Rochester: it is in no way interesting to you to know that." Rochester's revelation effectively resolves Jane's jealousy, relieving her of any need to resolve it herself. Nevertheless before Rochester's admits to his plot, Jane fails to make any attempt at resolving her jealousy. Indeed, she cannot even begin to take on the responsibility of solving her problem because she refuses to admit to the reality of her emotion. Jane's jealousy is resolved eventually, but not through her own efforts. She never takes responsibility for her jealousy or for resolving it. (215, 303).

Leopold Bloom, of Joyce's *Ulysses*, does take responsibility for resolving his jealousy, a task that he achieves by moving beyond blaming his rival, Boylan. In the novel's penultimate episode, "Ithaca," the narrator lists four "sentiments" that Bloom experiences when reflecting upon Boylan: "Envy, jealousy, abnegation, equanimity."⁷ While this list is not necessarily meant to represent a progression, a study of the novel reveals that Bloom resolves his jealousy by achieving abnegation and then equanimity.(602).

The first time that he sees Boylan on the sixteenth of June, Bloom deems his rival the

“[w]orst man in Dublin.” Upon coming near Boylan later in the day, however, Bloom’s reaction is largely one of fear and embarrassment rather than anger. Similarly, when he contemplates his wife’s infidelity throughout the day, he often flees the sore subject by reminiscing about past happiness. While rarely angry and never violent, Bloom’s jealousy is nevertheless painful and requires resolution. (76).

Bloom’s first step in overcoming his jealousy is that of moving beyond his frustration to reach “abnegation,” or self denial. In “Ithaca,” however, the catechism never specifies what Bloom renounces, only why he is able to renounce it– “in virtue of” having met Boylan, having exchanged hospitality with him, having accepted the rival’s youth and immaturity, having accepted sexual realities of the situation, and having joined into a business partnership with the young man. While open to interpretation, Bloom seems to renounce his right to be jealous and seems to do so by way of empathy. Boylan is someone whose “amorous egoism” he finds understandable and whose success he recognizes as yoked to his own. As a result Bloom is able to stop blaming Boylan and renounce the jealousy that he feels. One example of empathy’s triumph over jealousy takes place in “Sirens” as Bloom listens to Simon Dedalus sing “M’appari” from Flotow’s opera *Martha*.⁸ Reminiscing about the night he met Molly, Bloom finds himself in tune with both Lionel, the abandoned lover from the opera, and Simon, who earlier that day wept at his widow’s grave. The song’s concluding lines, “–Come ...!” “–To me!”, express the longing of all three and result in the narrator’s splicing together their names as “Siopold!” What Bloom finds in “Sirens” is a universal loneliness, a recognition that squelches

self-indulgent jealousy and produces the generosity found in the passage: “She ought to. Come. To me, to him, to her, you too, me us.” He cannot blame Boylan for finding a way to satisfy his loneliness, a sentiment that he glosses in “Ithaca” by viewing Molly as a kind of mystical being whose list of lovers is, ultimately, “a series originating in and repeated to infinity.” The love that Bloom and Molly share is not exclusive nor could it be. Of course accepting the impossibility of exclusive possession requires a great degree of detachment, the sort that is found in the empathy of the day but finds its fullest expression in the cosmic perspective of “Ithaca.”

The final stage of Bloom’s triumph over jealousy is “equanimity.” During the day Bloom attempts to understand the world through his scientific temperament. He often fails, finding himself unable to understand the concept of parallax and even unable to decide if the color black conducts, reflects, or refracts the heat,⁹ but he never wavers in his curiosity about the world nor his interest in science. This commitment is rewarded in “Ithaca,” when the narrator voice becomes nearly omniscient and allows Bloom to express his thoughts to the reader with the scientific precision for which he has longed. Significantly, the cosmic perspective of this narrative voice also matches the content of the episode, especially towards the end of “Ithaca” when Bloom achieves the peace that allows him to fall asleep. Having empathized with the immature Boylan, Bloom goes even further outside of himself in “Ithaca,” viewing his problems with a cosmic detachment akin to the narrator’s. The infidelity of Bloom’s wife is not the end of the world, and in “Ithaca” he reaches this understanding, asserting that Molly’s having sex with Boylan is natural, is less serious than the “annihilation of the planet,” is less reprehensible than a great number of crimes, and is utterly “irreparable.” Having achieved this equanimity, Bloom then feels no need to blame Boylan for his problems or to take the kind of violent “retribution”

that a Victorian lover might desire. Instead he remains objective and serene, sentiments that he justifies with a list of reasons that culminates in “the apathy of the stars.” Extraordinarily evocative, this phrase not only expresses Bloom’s recognition of the universe’s indifference and the relative insignificance of his problems, but also suggests the Stoics’ *apathia*. *Apathia*, which can be defined as “the extinction of the passions through the ascendancy of reason,” provides a perfect description of Bloom’s movement from passionate jealousy to rational equanimity.¹⁰ Unlike his Victorian predecessors Bloom manages to admit to his jealousy and yet still move away from blaming Boylan for it. In doing both, he takes responsibility for resolving his jealousy and succeeds in doing so. (Joyce, 602, 603, 604; Gifford, 604).

While Jane Eyre and Leopold Bloom succeed in resolving a single instance of jealousy, both Victorians and moderns view jealousy as something that only truly ends with the improvement or the disintegration of a love. Brontë and Joyce both depict characters enriching their relationships by means of overcoming jealousy, but the authors nevertheless imagine this enrichment taking place in very different ways— Jane’s by exploiting another individual’s jealousy, Bloom’s by facing his own.

Charlotte Brontë depicts Jane and Rochester resolving the problem of jealousy in their relationship by overcoming the consequences of a third party’s jealousy. While Jane may think that Rochester’s revelation resolves any problems with jealousy that the couple might have, she is wrong. After a month of blissful courtship the specter of jealousy once again enters their lives when Bertha Mason, Rochester’s secret wife, steals into Jane’s room late at night and tears Jane’s wedding veil. Enraged that Jane might take her husband, Bertha clearly hopes to stop the forthcoming wedding, and she gets her wish when her brother reveals her existence at the

wedding ceremony. Later, the vindictive “madwoman” goes so far as to set fire to Rochester’s home before jumping off the roof and committing suicide. Despite the disruptive nature of her jealousy, however, Bertha’s actions ultimately bring Jane and Rochester closer. When Jane leaves Rochester’s Thornfield Manor she meets St. John Rivers, a suitor whose proposal of marriage forces her to recognize just how much she loves Rochester. Upon returning to him, Jane finds that Bertha has burnt down Thornfield and in the process left Rochester without his eyesight and one hand. Jane faces these consequences of jealousy unflinchingly, becoming Rochester’s eyes and becoming so close to him that the two begin to function as “one flesh.” Fully fused, the resilient couple overcome the consequences of jealousy to develop a relationship too tight to permit the emotion. And yet, the jealousy that Brontë arranges for them to surmount comes not from within their relationship but from without. Jane resolves the problem of jealousy but without facing her own emotions. (514).

Conversely, Joyce orchestrates his novel in such a way that in order to enrich his love Bloom first recognizes the usefulness of jealousy and overcomes his share of the emotion. To understand the sense in which Bloom and Molly begin to rebuild their love by means of jealousy, one must first understand the three senses of time in *Ulysses*: ending, ticking, and sticking. All three have a certain meaning to Bloom prior to four o’clock, the hour designated for the meeting of Molly and Boylan. For example, the pre-four o’clock Bloom believes that time will end when Molly sleeps with Boylan. Endeavoring in “Lestrygonians” to plan out the rest of his day, Bloom thinks, “Then about six o’clock I can. Six. Six. Time will be gone then.” This last sentence can be read figuratively, as meaning something akin to “it will be too late then,” but also suggests a literal end of time, a personal apocalypse that is also suggested by the “six [. . .] Six. Six,” of the

three previous sentences. Bloom is so fixated on his wife's assignation that he cannot imagine life after it. As four o'clock approaches Bloom also reflects upon the clock's incessant ticking. "At four, she said. Time ever passing. Clockhands turning," runs one typical stream-of-consciousness passage. Likewise, soon after remembering how his wife and Boylan touched fingers along a river bank, Bloom declares, "Can't bring back time. Like holding water in your hand." While Bloom's jealousy leads him to experience time as a force rushing to its inevitable end, that same jealousy also leads him to remember his past happiness with Molly and in that way arrest time. Indeed, Bloom's thoughts so often turn to reminiscence that he can even be accused of being stuck in the past, a point that Joyce makes by placing Bloom's most detailed recollection of his day with Molly on Howth between two descriptions of flies "Stuck on the pane." Time in *Ulysses*, then, operates like Mickey Anderson's "alltimesticking watches"—all times ticking and yet all time sticking. That Bloom's memories help him to return to the past even while they remind him just how long ago that past took place reveals the full extent of the paradoxical understanding of time in this novel. Bloom's fear of his impending cuckoldry leads him to experience time as something that will end at four o'clock, something that is ever ticking, and something that is nevertheless rooted in the sticky past. (143, 214, 137, 144).

Bloom's understanding of time—its ending, ticking, and sticking—shifts in important ways in the "Nausicaa" episode. For example, in this episode Bloom finds that time did, in a sense, end at around the moment when his wife met with Boylan because around that moment his watch stopped. "Funny my watch stopped at half past four," he muses before eventually adding, "Was that just when he, she?" Thinking about his stopped watch later on, however, Bloom comes to see his wife's affair not as something that ends time, but as something that

restarts time by freeing him from the past. It is at this point in the novel that he begins to recognize the usefulness of jealousy. Blaming the watch's malfunction on magnetism he thinks, "Back of everything magnetism. Earth for instance pulling this way and being pulled. That causes movement. And time, well that's the time the movement takes." The complex symbolism of *Ulysses* allows one to read "sexual magnetism" for "magnetism" and "jealousy" for "movement." In other words, while Bloom is ruminating upon the forces of magnetism and time, he is also developing his newfound understanding that the sexual magnetism between Molly and Boylan creates his jealousy, which in turn creates time. The cue that Bloom's "magnetism" refers to his wife's affair comes at the end of this paragraph when he envisions a magnetic fork and thinks, "Come. Come. Tip. Woman and man that is. Fork and steel. Molly, he." "Ithaca" likewise makes clear that the movement caused by this magnetism is Bloom's jealousy. After all, Bloom becomes jealous "Because attraction between agent(s) and reagent(s) at all instants varied, with inverse proportion of increase and decrease." This jealousy then creates time by forcing Bloom to recall the intensity of his love for Molly and by inspiring him to recapture the old love again. Of course Bloom can never return to that day on Ben Howth, but it is only with his wife's affair that this realization takes hold of him, only with this "irreparable" act that he becomes unstuck from the past and begins to wonder how he can build his love in the future. (303, 306, 602, 603).

The paradoxes of love and time that *Ulysses* advances are largely present in Joyce's play *Exiles* and become clearer when viewed alongside this companion text. By the end of these works both Molly and Bertha have roughly the same desire, but Bertha's is expressed more clearly thanks to the somewhat heavy-handed nature of the play. "I want my lover," Bertha cries in her closing speech, "To meet him, to go to him, to give myself to him. You, Dick. O, my

strange wild lover, come back to me again!” These lines contain a paradoxical desire. Bertha wants to meet a lover for the first time yet wants it to be Richard. She wants a “strange wild lover” whom she has already known as a husband. Similarly, Molly’s closing memory of Howth suggests a desire to be loved by Bloom again for the first time. In other words, these women want passionate love within their marriages, a desire that requires a rejection of not only the traditional understanding of marriage but also the banal, everyday nature of the institution.¹¹ Bertha’s night with Robert and Molly’s afternoon with Boylan, however, help to bring the women closer to their goals. After these periods of uncertainty, the husbands experience their wives “in restless living wounding doubt.” These men are still the same people, still linked to their pasts by means of memory. Nevertheless, each man is also separated from his past by a betrayal that forces him to live like a lover again, like a man with no definite control over his wife. Infidelity spurs jealous husbands to rebuild their loves. It demolishes the past and allows the lovers to return to the beginning of their relationships but with a difference— ineffable memory. Therefore, if a husband can overcome the wound that “tires” him, can like Bloom overcome jealousy by way of abnegation and equanimity, then he can go home again. Forever changed by his voyage, Bloom nonetheless returns home to rebuild the love that he shares with his Penelope. And therefore it is through jealousy that Bloom and Molly restore their love, refreshed until it grows stale once more and the journey begins yet again. (73).

Extreme Responsibility

While modern novels support taking responsibility for jealousy, that support is limited. Modernists reveal how lovers are responsible for various aspects of their jealousy but do not suggest that these lovers ignore the roles played by the beloved and the rival. A lover who views

himself as wholly responsible for his jealousy develops a view of the emotion no less perverted than that of the most irresponsible Victorians. In *The Trial* (1925), Franz Kafka provides a cautionary example of just how destructive an extreme sense of responsibility can be. The novel's protagonist, Joseph K., reveals his disturbed sense of responsibility for jealousy over the course of his relationships with three women: Fräulein Burstner, the court usher's wife, and Leni.

K.'s attachment to Fräulein Burstner is the novel's most important romantic relationship. Nonetheless, the very existence of this relationship can be overlooked by the reader. The narrator's first description of Burstner as a typist "with whom K. had exchanged no more than a few words of greeting" appears to mark her as unimportant. In reality, K.'s lack of contact with Burstner reveals the strength of his feelings for her: he can hardly bring himself to talk to her. While often oblique, enough evidence of K.'s desire for Burstner is available in the text. The most obvious example takes place after K.'s first prolonged conversation with her. Parting from her for the night, he first kisses her "like a thirsty animal lapping greedily at a spring it has found at last." Lest this kiss be seen as a freak, a result of K.'s stressful day, Kafka presents more evidence of his protagonist's desire for Burstner, including K.'s characterization of her as "an ordinary typist who [cannot] resist him for long."¹² The final evidence of his feelings for her can be found in the circumstances surrounding the opening of his trial. While the literary critic Robert Alter lauds Kafka for his "gratuitous detail," the incongruous and irreducible weirdness of his description, the location of K.'s initial questioning is anything but gratuitous. By placing the initial proceedings of K.'s trial in Burstner's bedroom, Kafka emphasizes the intense sexual feelings that K. harbors for her and his mysterious guilt about these feelings. Frustrated in love, K. will eventually develop a jealousy that functions to further his trial. (Kafka, 12, 33, 242; Alter,

148).

The manner in which K. holds himself responsible for his jealousy over Burstner establishes a template for dealing with this emotion that he will follow and refine as the novel progresses. This template consists of his attempts to downplay the importance of his rivals and beloveds which result in K. feeling more responsible for his jealousy and thus more worthy of punishment. The night of his initial questioning, K. has a discussion with his landlord Frau Grubach in which he expresses his desire to apologize to Burstner for his trial's invading her bedroom. Grubach explains that Burstner is at the theater and goes on to gossip that she has seen the young lady "twice this month in other neighborhoods and each time with a different man." Hearing this news sends K. into a rage, one that can only be understood by recognizing his devotion to Burstner and his subsequent jealousy. "[Y]ou're completely mistaken, I know the woman quite well, and there's no truth at all in what you've said," K. tells Grubach and in doing so denies the existence of any rivals. Discounting Gruber's firsthand account, K. goes on to contemplate the feelings Burstner must have for him while "omitt[ing] any consideration of what he had learned about Fräulein Burstner from Frau Gruber." He cannot accept that he might possess rivals for Burstner's affections, and yet his jealousy persists, leaving only himself and his beloved to blame. (25, 242).

K. also downplays the importance of Burstner herself in his daydreams after work. During these attempts to "assemble his observations," K. always finds himself in the courthouse, yet always encounters Grubach's tenants with Burstner "in the middle of the group, her arms around two men standing on either side of her." The narrator claims that this vision makes "absolutely no impression" on K., expressing the character's unwillingness to admit that he cares

enough about Burstner to be jealous. Of course K. *is* jealous, as his consistent return to this particular image suggests. That the image is in fact “the indelible memory of a photograph” that K. “had once seen in Fräulein Burstner’s room” only manages to further reveal the obsessive nature of this jealousy. K. feels jealous but refuses to believe he has rivals and refuses to acknowledge that he cares about Burstner let alone that he is jealous of her. Unable to admit that he has a problem, K. is unable to understand his jealousy or even to blame others for it. The result is an ineffable guilt, one that leads him to punish himself. (261, 262).

After both his conversation with Frau Grubach and his imagined encounter with Fräulein Burstner and her two beaux, K. moves deeper into his trial. Following his dismissal of Grubach’s suggestion that Burstner spends her nights with different men, K. concludes his talk with her by declaring: “if you want to run a clean house, you’ll have to start by giving me notice.” This comment alludes not only to K.’s general guilt, but to his special disgust at allowing his jealousy to break free. Spurred on by this disgust, K. goes on to wait up for Burstner and to reenact his initial questioning in her bedroom, taking on the role of the interrogator. In this scene, Kafka presents his reader with a startling image of K.’s increasing desire to try himself as well as an indication of what lies behind this desire: guilt over his jealousy. Frustration with his feelings of jealousy proves to be one of the engines driving K.’s guilt and his subsequent trial. Indeed, this pattern of feeling jealous and then moving deeper into the trial is repeated throughout the novel, even in K.’s daydreams, his “half sleep” after work. For after K. sees the image of Frau Burstner hugging the two men and denies that it makes him jealous, he feels driven to hurry “back and forth through the courthouse with long strides.” In choosing to wander the courthouse halls rather than face the reality of his jealousy K. provides another example of his desire to punish

himself rather than examine the situation openly and distribute blame accordingly. While jealousy, by its nature, requires a lover, a beloved, and a rival, K. perverts jealousy by downplaying the role of the beloved and the rival, the better to focus on his own culpability. (25-26, 261, 262).

K.'s second romantic interest in *The Trial* does not possess a bedroom that can be transformed into an interrogator's office; she lives in a room that adjoins the court. The court usher's wife first takes an interest in K. when he expresses a willingness to help her while he is on trial. Responding to her overtures, K. admits that the woman does "tempt him" and that he can "see no good reason not to give into that temptation." After all, he wonders, "How could she ensnare him" on the court's behalf? She does so, however, by arousing his jealousy and therefore his guilt. In the middle of K.'s encounter with the court usher's wife, the pair are interrupted by a law student. K. paces the room angrily, waiting for the student to leave, and when the young man instead begins to carry the woman out of the room, K. goes so far as to grab him by the shoulder and eventually shove him. Discussing the incident later with another of his rivals, the court usher himself, K. hears the husband sum up the student's abductions of his wife by saying, "Of course my wife is the most beautiful woman in the building, and I'm the only one who doesn't dare protect himself." K.'s response, "If that's the way it is, then obviously nothing can be done," illustrates his unwillingness to hold the student responsible for his actions, his preference for ignoring the role of his rival. K. does go on to claim that he will deal with the student "when the occasion arises," but his earlier concern that as a defendant he must fear this student's influence on his trial makes his bravado unconvincing. K. is simply more interested in trying himself than he is in assigning blame to anyone else. Like the wife who does not "want to be freed" from the

clutches of the student, and the husband who continues to work for the court, K. will not step outside of the legal system. Instead he again responds to his feelings of jealousy by becoming more involved in his trial, in this case by accepting the husband's offer to explore the law court offices upstairs. Rather than making an attempt to right the situation at the root of his jealousy, K. instead chooses to punish himself for that jealousy. The court usher's wife fades away, but K.'s guilt at coveting her does not. (61, 67, 68, 63).

The final woman whom K. feels jealous over is his lawyer's nurse, Leni. Unlike his previous love interests, Leni actually becomes K.'s lover, but in general K.'s relationship with the nurse only continues the tendencies he has already established. When K. begins to suspect that he might be sharing Leni with another client, Herr Block, he questions her in front of the merchant. "I really don't know what you have to be jealous about," declares Block, at Leni's urging, and in the most winning example of downplaying his rival, K. replies, "I really don't know either." After slipping back into his arms, Leni then asks K. if he would like to see his lawyer. "Don't neglect your trial!" Leni tells K., and considering the fact that he has just experienced jealousy, there is little doubt that he will. Rather than visiting the lawyer, however, K. instead begins to mine Block's legal knowledge. As with the court usher, K. becomes comfortable enough around his rival to use Block as a way of learning more about his trial. So interesting are the details of Block's own trial, that when Leni returns to the room and interrupts this story, K. requests that she give them "another minute." Eventually, he even goes so far as to push her hand away "without comment." (170, 180).

K.'s ignoring of the women who made him jealous finds its apotheosis in his final thoughts regarding Fräulein Burstner. As he is being led off by his executioners K. sees Burstner,

or what appears to be Burstner, coming up a flight of stairs. Immediately before seeing her, K. decides to resist the guards accompanying him, but upon seeing this vision of his old love K. concludes that fighting the system is hopeless. As the narrator describes the situation, “it made no difference to K. whether it was really Fräulein Burstner; the futility of resistance was suddenly clear to him.” While open to a multitude of interpretations, K.’s sudden inability to rebel against his executioners suggests a realization that he can never find a love free from sexual and jealous guilt, the sources of motivation behind his trial. Likewise, his claim that it does not matter if it is really Burstner that he is seeing illustrates the role that women have come to play in his life as sources of a jealousy that K. then takes fully upon himself. Burstner proved essential to opening and furthering K.’s trial, but by novel’s end he is so much more interested in his jealousy than in the objects of his jealousy that he can pass by them, ready to lead his executioners to the place of his inevitable death. (227).

Conclusion

Even amidst this novelistic evidence that moderns viewed jealousy differently from their Victorian counterparts, the question remains: how can such a deeply-ingrained human emotion have a history? One explanation relies on the assumption that an individual’s preconceived understanding of jealousy helps to shape that individual’s eventual experience of the emotion.¹³ Because societal norms play a large role in forming an individual’s preconceptions, different eras with different norms might therefore produce lovers who experience jealousy differently. Authors enjoy a reciprocal relationship with their times, depicting the norms of their era, but doing so with an eye towards changing those norms. Modern authors, for example, recorded a shift in how their contemporaries experienced jealousy but also attempted to spur further change

by emphasizing the importance of taking responsibility. Their novels remain an invaluable record of how modern individuals took responsibility for their jealousy, and how leading modern artists hoped to alter the conception, and eventually the experience, of that emotion.

Notes

1. When I use the term “Victorian” I am using it merely as a period marker, a way of referring to a span of time beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century and ending at the start of the twentieth. When I use the term “Victorian novel” I am not referring to a specific type of novel (e.g. the Romantic novel, the realist novel) but rather a novel written during the Victorian era. I use the terms “modern” and “modern novel” in a similar manner and define the modern era as beginning at roughly the same time as the First World War.

2. When I use the term “author” in this paper I am always referring to the implied author unless otherwise noted. Likewise, even when I refer to author by name I am not presenting the opinions of the “flesh and blood” author but only the opinions that can be gleaned from a careful reading of the text.

3. Nevertheless, the jealous lover defense was not as respected in Victorian society as it was in Ancient Athens where the killing of an adulterer “was allowed, as a crime of passion, by Attic law” (Fagles, 316). Interestingly, however, according to Plutarch’s account of Ancient Sparta jealousy was frowned upon there, and old men allowed their young wives to be bedded by young men, while young men were legally permitted to ask a husband for the privilege of sleeping with his wife. Jealousy got in the way of creating the large and strong pool of children on which Sparta thrived and as such its legitimacy was dismissed by the lawgiver Lycurgus (Russell, 102). This contrast between these city-states reveals the degree to which contemporaneous cultures can differ in their attitude towards jealousy and by implication suggests that the cultures of two different time periods might also provide evidence of a similar difference. Additionally, these city-states not only supported different attitudes towards jealousy but demanded different behavior from their citizens, suggesting that members of each culture might learn to react to and even experience jealousy differently.

4. This passage comes from Lombroso’s *L’Uomo delinquente* (1876). This translation of the passage and the contention that it influenced Zola can both be found in Roger Whitehouse’s notes to *The Beast Within* (note 11, chapter II, page 395).

5. While Lawrence and his character are hardly one in the same, their opinions often share a strong resemblance. In his introduction to the 1998 Oxford UP edition of *Women in Love* David Bradshaw notes the connection between Birkin’s statements and Lawrence’s “doctrinal essays” (xx). Conscious of the similarities and differences between author and character, Bradshaw refers to Birkin as Lawrence’s “prospective mouthpiece,” one whom the novelist challenged more and more in his revisions of the work (xviii). Considering Lawrence’s emphasis on the importance of

personal responsibility throughout the novel, however, I believe that the spirit, if not the letter, of the following comment belongs to the author.

6. Birkin's claims seem more sensible when one puts them in the context of war. The first World War was taking place as Lawrence wrote *Women in Love* and Birkin's words can be interpreted as a declaration that the men who volunteered for war made the war possible and are responsible for whatever deaths occurred, including their own. In any case, Lawrence's choice to invoke murder and thus war in his novel's initial statement on responsibility is almost certainly no accident. In *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, Alexander Döblin couches his final call for responsibility in similarly violent context when Franz Biberkopf's resolves: "If war comes along and they conscript me, and I don't know why, and the war's started without me, well, then it's my fault, it serves me right. [. . .] So I will no longer go on shouting fate as I once did: Fate, Fate! It's no use revering it merely as Fate, we must look at it, grasp it, down it, and not hesitate" (377-78). Along with related factors like the decrease in religious faith and the increasing currency of existentialist thought, World War I created an uncertainty that inspired modern writers to rethink past assumptions about personal responsibility and to posit greater personal responsibility as part of the solution to society's problems.

7. The narrator of "Ithaca" makes a fine distinction between envy and jealousy, describing Bloom as envious of Boylan's sexual vigor and jealous of Boylan's ability to attract Molly. In making my argument I do not follow this distinction and treat both of Bloom's antagonistic sentiments as a single emotion: jealousy.

8. For a brief summary of the plot of *Martha* see page 129 of Don Gifford's *Ulysses Annotated*. For the full lyrics to the English translation of "M'appari" sung by Simon Dedalus see page 292.

9. The color black absorbs heat.

10. The definition of *apathia* is quoted from page 604 of Gifford's *Ulysses Annotated*. Gifford credits the classicist W.B. Stanford with suggesting this particular gloss of Bloom's "apathy of the stars."

11. This attitude towards married love may be evidence of a historical change in the conception and experience of love. Literary evidence suggests that maintaining passionate love throughout marriage was of greater concern to moderns than to Victorians. As Stephen Kern writes in *The Culture of Love*, "In my own research I found no major love story written before the twentieth century which focused on a fulfilling love between a married couple." Works like *Ulysses* and *Exiles*, then, represent a historical shift in the literary depiction of love, and perhaps illuminate a shift in the experience of love.

12. This quotation is taken from "B.'s Friend," a section of *The Trial* that serves as the second chapter of the first edition of the novel but that is relegated to the status of "fragment" in Breon Mitchell's translation. For the purposes of this paper I have chosen to grant the fragments an evidentiary value on par with that of the novel proper. In my opinion the K. that Kafka attempts to realize in these fragments is consistent with the K. of the rest of the novel.

13. For a philosophical, book-length explication of this theory of emotion see Robert C. Solomon's *The Passions*.

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